

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Minutes

Meeting Held on May 26, 2021

In Attendance: Hopkinton: Elaine Caldarone, Chip Heil; North Kingstown: Ahren Cohen; Richmond: Antonia Bryson, Pete August; South Kingstown: Dennis Migneault, Bill McCusker; Stonington: Fred Wagner; North Stonington: Madeline Jeffery, Dick Seager; West Greenwich: Chris Grube, Pat Lardner; Westerly: Jon Ericson; CT DEEP: Eric Thomas; RI DEM: Tee Jay Boudreau; Save the Bay: Dave Prescott; National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis; Kassi Donnelly, Coordinator.

A quorum having been met, the Vice Chair D. Prescott called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Secretary's Report: A. Bryson presented the draft minutes of the April 28, 2021 meeting. There being no discussion, P. August moved the approval and A. Cohen seconded, and the motion passed.

Financial Report:

P. August presented the monthly financial report. There was discussion regarding the funding cycle and the status of unspent funds. A. Cohen moved to approve the financial report and F. Wagner seconded, and the motion passed.

P. August requested comment on and approval of the SOP project and budget process, which had been provided to the membership with the April and May agendas. D. Migneault asked to postpone voting on the SOP to further review it, and suggested that the Council hold a workshop to discuss the SOP. Discussion ensued, and D. Migneault moved to convene a workshop to review the SOP and identify areas of concern, with the goal of bringing recommendations to Council, and B. McCusker seconded. Eight of those present voted against holding a workshop and four voted to hold one. The motion failed. A. Bryson then moved to accept the SOP. F. Wagner seconded. Eight members voted to approve, two voted to disapprove, and the motion passed.

Committee Reports

1. Bylaws:

J. Ericson reported that the bylaws committee reviewed and approved the MOU with WPWA, and it was ready for full Council vote. A. Cohen asked whether the termination clause should require that the reasons be documented. After discussion, it was felt that there will be sufficient articulation of the rationale in meetings. A. Cohen then moved to approve the MOU, P. August seconded, and the MOU was approved unanimously.

2. Executive:

Potter Hill Dam Workshop: K. Donnelly reported on the internal workshop held to provide information and elicit questions regarding the dam project. The goal was to submit questions to the project website prior to the next public information session. A list of questions was circulated to the membership prior to the meeting. C. Heil suggested consolidation of the two questions on the list regarding the project that removed the dam at Bradford. K. Donnelly noted that the question regarding the effect on bridges will

be deleted as the information has already been provided. She requested Council approval to submit the list as modified. B. McCusker moved, P. August seconded, and submission was unanimously approved. K. Donnelly noted that June 10 at 6 pm is the tentative date for next official meeting on the dam project, and she will circulate a confirmation and meeting login credentials when available.

3. Advisory Committee

A. Bryson reported that the Committee is finalizing a document on best practices for siting solar energy systems, and hopes to present it to the full Council before the next meeting. The Committee is also discussing how to partner or leverage the resources of environmental nonprofits to become more knowledgeable and effectively weigh in regarding proposed State legislation and regulatory actions.

C. Grube described the proposed conservation inventory project that is on the Committee's agenda. He received suggestions from members on mapping resources and general support for the project.

4. Projects Committee

K. Donnelly reported that development of the "idea pre-proposal review process" was well under way, and that the Committee expected to present it to the Council in June. She also reported that the Hopkinton parks commission gave its approval for the design for Briggs Park to be completed.

5. Information & Education Committee

- D. Migneault said the Committee has worked on three branding initiatives. The first was the provision of business cards to members. The Committee is in favor of creating cards, and presented two options, a generic card with the logo, website, and a QR code, and the same card with personalized information for the member. He provided quotes for pricing from a local printer. There was discussion of the usefulness of cards in general, and of whether paper cards have been superseded by digital resources. After discussion, the membership decided to adopt paper cards, with eight members wanting the generic card and six members wanting the personalized card. D. Migneault will canvass those not present at the meeting.
- The second initiative was the creation of a banner, which can be used for tabling at events. D. Migneault showed a prototype of one.
- P. August introduced the third initiative, note cards which can be used for sending thank yous and other personal notes. He showed a prototype with a photo on the front, and a logo on back. There would be five different designs for the front, four river scenes and a Shaw painting. He suggested Council members could provide photos. Every member would be able to use the cards. In discussion, members emphasized the importance of identifying local scenes for the designs, and tying to the ORVs. D. Migneault moved to pursue the note card project, B. McCusker seconded, and all approved.
- D. Migneault also reported that he had worked with the Nature Conservancy to place Pawcatuck River signs at the Conservancy's Carter Preserve.

Project Updates

1. Kayak trail: L. Bonatakis reported that the four towns participating in the creation of the trail are not looking for Council assistance at this time. She thought there would be an opportunity to get involved with mapping or other resources later in the process, but she recommended putting Council involvement

on the back burner for now. In a related project, the Council could begin mapping existing public access sites on an interactive online map.

2. Review of the Project, Committee and Council Member Google Form: K. Donnelly reported that the form has been tested and has been live for its first month. It needs more users. She clarified that members should report for the prior month by the middle of the following month, i.e. report for the month of May by June 15. Reporting of volunteer hours is an important way to support the Council's NPS sponsorship, and will help it sustain and increase funding.

New Business

1. Election of Officers: J. Ericson reported that 25 of 31 members voted in the officer elections. He reported that 94.7 percent of those voting selected C. Grube as Chair, P. August as Treasurer, and A. Bryson as Secretary. Sixty-eight percent voted for D. Prescott as Vice Chair, and 26 percent voted for D. Migneault as Vice Chair. Accordingly, the new officers are:

C. Grube, Chair
D. Prescott, Vice Chair
P. August, Treasurer
A. Bryson, Secretary

Members expressed gratitude and thanks to J. Ericson for his excellent service as chair for the past two and a half years.

2. Water withdrawal regulations: B. McCusker sought information on RI regulations regarding water withdrawals, in anticipation of potential future drought conditions, and for protection of the rivers. He believes that RI DEM internally has developed a draft of revised regulations which have not been finalized for some time. T. Boudreau provided information and is willing to contact relevant staff with B. McCusker. E. Thomas reported on the extensive CT resources on the subject, and provided two links:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water/Diversions/Water-Diversion-Program>
<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water/Stream-Flow-Standards/Stream-Flow-Regulations>

3. Water quality testing: B. McCusker reported that B. Maietta has volunteered to do water quality testing at two sites which B. McCusker and Elise Torello, WPWA consultant, had previously covered.

4. Town Updates: F. Wagner reported on developments on the Stonington circus lot, and said that E. Thomas was looking into putting W&S signs at the Pawcatuck Management Area nearby the lot.

Good of the Order

K. Donnelly reported that the Council Google calendar is live, and urged members to try to use it. Members should contact K. Donnelly or P. August to resolve issues, or simply use the calendar on WPWildRivers.org website.

F. Wagner asked the I&E Committee to consider providing badges.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by B. McCusker, seconded by F. Wagner, and adjournment was approved at 7.20 PM.

Next Meeting: Fourth Wednesday of each month at 5 pm. Next meeting is scheduled for June 23, 2021.

